



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
OFFICE OF THE COUNTY COUNSEL

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April 26, 2023

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TO: CELIA ZAVALA
Executive Officer
Board of Supervisors

Attention: Agenda Preparation

FROM: ELIZABETH D. MILLER
Assistant County Counsel
Justice and Safety Division

RE: **Item for the Board of Supervisors' Agenda**
County Contract Cities Liability Trust Fund
Claims Board Recommendation
Lauren Dodson v. County of Los Angeles, et al.
United States District Court Case No. 2:20-cv-04011

Attached is the Agenda entry for the Los Angeles County Contract Cities Liability Trust Fund Claims Board's recommendation in the above-referenced matter. Also attached is the Case Summary and the Summary Corrective Action Plan for the case.

It is requested that this recommendation, the Case Summary, and the Summary Corrective Action Plan be placed on the Board of Supervisors' agenda.

EDM:js

Attachments

Board Agenda

MISCELLANEOUS COMMUNICATIONS

**Settlement for Matter Entitled Lauren Dodson v. County of Los Angeles, et al.
United States District Court Case No. 2:20-cv-04011.**

Los Angeles County Contract Cities Liability Trust Fund Claims Board's recommendation:
Authorize settlement of the matter entitled **Lauren Dodson v. County of Los Angeles, et al.**
United States District Court Case No. 2:20-cv-04011 in the amount of \$400,000.00
and instruct the Auditor-Controller to draw a warrant to implement this settlement from the
Sheriff's Department Contract Cities Trust Fund's budget.

This lawsuit concerns allegations of deliberate fabrication and misrepresenting, distorting,
and omitting material information by Sheriff's Deputies.

CASE SUMMARY

INFORMATION ON PROPOSED SETTLEMENT OF LITIGATION

CASE NAME	Lauren Dodson vs. County of Los Angeles et al.
CASE NUMBER	2:20-cv-04011
COURT	United States District Court
DATE FILED	April 30, 2020
COUNTY DEPARTMENT	Sheriff's Department
PROPOSED SETTLEMENT AMOUNT	\$ 400,000
ATTORNEY FOR PLAINTIFF	Deirdre L. O'Connor, Esquire Seamus Law
COUNTY COUNSEL ATTORNEY	Tyson Nelson
NATURE OF CASE	Plaintiff alleges the Deputies deliberately fabricated their incident report by intentionally misrepresenting, distorting, and omitting material information.
PAID ATTORNEY FEES, TO DATE	\$ 80,995
PAID COSTS, TO DATE	\$ 2,753



Summary Corrective Action Plan

The intent of this form is to assist departments in writing a corrective action plan summary for attachment to the settlement documents developed for the Board of Supervisors and/or the County of Los Angeles Claims Board. The summary should be a specific overview of the claims/lawsuits' identified root causes and corrective actions (status, time frame, and responsible party). This summary does not replace the Corrective Action Plan form. If there is a question related to confidentiality, please consult County Counsel.

Date of incident/event:	August 30, 2017, at approximately 1:50 p.m.
Briefly provide a description of the incident/event:	<p><u>Lauren Dodson v. County of Los Angeles, et al.</u> Summary Corrective Action Plan 2023-88</p> <p>Details provided in this document summarize the incident. The Information provided is a culmination of various sources to provide an abstract of the incident.</p> <p>There were two calls for service which involved both the plaintiff and the informant. Deputy one responded to both calls for service.</p> <p>First Call for Service</p> <p>The plaintiff drove to her ex-boyfriend's residence to retrieve some of her personal property. Upon her arrival, the plaintiff left her 7-month-old daughter alone in her vehicle. The plaintiff attempted to enter the residence with her key but was unable to gain access to the residence. Due to the plaintiff not being able to gain access into the residence, she began to break out the front windows (near the front door) at the residence.</p> <p>On August 30, 2017, at approximately 9:00 a.m., the South Los Angeles Sheriff's Station received a call for service from an informant (plaintiff's ex-boyfriend) who stated his ex-girlfriend (the plaintiff) was inside of his residence breaking items with a hammer. An emergent call for service was dispatched.</p> <p>Deputy one was assigned the emergent call for service. Upon his arrival, he contacted the informant outside. At the conclusion of his investigation, he determined it was an on-going dispute between both the plaintiff and the informant. Deputy one advised the plaintiff and the informant to seek a restraining order. Deputy one ordered the plaintiff not to return to the residence unless being accompanied by law enforcement. No report was written for this incident.</p> <p>The following statement is based on Deputy Two's report from the second call for service:</p> <p>On August 30, 2017, at approximately 2:05 p.m., the South Los Angeles Sheriff's Station received a call for service from an informant (No further detail) who indicated she heard a male and female yelling and a baby crying at the residence. The South Los Angeles Sheriff's Station dispatched a second call for service.</p> <p>Upon deputy one arriving at the informant's residence, he detained the informant.</p> <p>Deputies one and two contacted the plaintiff outside next to the U-Haul, and she stated she arrived at the informant's residence (ex-boyfriend) with</p>

	<p>her daughter and her friend to retrieve her personal belongings. Upon knocking on the door, the informant opened the door and allowed the plaintiff and her friend to enter the residence, and she started packing her belongings. As she packed photos into a box, she observed there were several photos missing. The plaintiff confronted the informant about the whereabouts of the missing photos and told the informant she will be taking the couch when she leaves his residence. After the plaintiff advised the informant she was taking the couch with her, an argument ensued. The plaintiff had her daughter stay inside of the informant's residence while she carried her boxed belongings to the parked U-Haul in front of the informant's residence. When she walked back into the residence, she saw the word "wh**e" written in large letters on the couch. The plaintiff became enraged and began yelling profanities at the informant. The argument escalated and both the plaintiff and the informant started yelling at each other. The plaintiff stated she nor the informant hit each other during the altercation.</p> <p>While deputy two was interviewing the plaintiff, deputy one observed the plaintiff's daughter had swelling to both her forehead and head.</p> <p>Deputy two also observed a large lump on the top of the plaintiff's head and a scratch on the tip of her nose. Deputy one requested paramedics to respond to their location to treat the plaintiff's daughter's injuries.</p> <p>Deputy two asked the plaintiff how her daughter sustained her injuries. The plaintiff first indicated she did not know how her daughter sustained her injuries. The plaintiff then changed her statement and indicated her daughter's injuries were from an old injury when she was attempting to crawl. The plaintiff then claimed her daughter could have been injured when she hit her head on the handle of the car seat while removing her daughter from the car seat.</p> <p>Deputy two interviewed the informant (plaintiff's ex-boyfriend) and asked what transpired prior to deputy one and two's arrival. The informant indicated the plaintiff arrived at his residence with their child and her friend (witness) so she could pack some of her belongings. An argument ensued in the living room and escalated due to the plaintiff confronting him about missing photographs. The informant indicated the plaintiff started throwing miscellaneous items and furniture at him. The informant became enraged and started throwing items at the plaintiff. Both the plaintiff and the informant missed, but their daughter was struck with a piece of wood. As deputy one and two arrived, the plaintiff picked up their daughter and walked outside with the witness.</p> <p>Deputy two interviewed the witness and she indicated the plaintiff and the informant were in the living room arguing. While their daughter was in her car seat, both the plaintiff and the informant began throwing objects at each other. Their daughter began to cry, and the plaintiff removed her from the car seat to comfort her. As the plaintiff held their daughter, she continued to throw objects at the informant. The informant then picked up a piece of wood and struck the plaintiff in the upper portion of her body subsequently striking their child at the same time.</p> <p>Deputy two recontacted the plaintiff regarding how she and the plaintiff's daughter were injured. The plaintiff refuted the witness' assertions. The plaintiff denied being struck and or striking the informant.</p>
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	<p>Deputy one concluded his investigation and subsequently arrested the plaintiff for Child Endangerment, 273a (a) P.C. and Spousal Battery, 243(e)(1) P.C.</p> <p>The informant was also arrested for Child Endangerment, 273a(a) P.C. and Spousal Assault 273.5(a) P.C.</p> <p>Deputy two placed the plaintiff and informant's daughter in protective custody.</p> <p>The following statement is based on deputy one's observations which were denoted in deputy two's criminal report:</p> <p>While deputy two was interviewing the plaintiff, he walked over to the U-Haul truck's passenger compartment where the plaintiff's daughter was sitting. Deputy two observed swelling to the plaintiff's daughter's forehead and head.</p> <p>At approximately 4:40 p.m., Deputy one contacted the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to report suspected child abuse and generated a Suspected Child Abuse Report (SCAR).</p> <p>Deputy one reported the plaintiff and ex-boyfriend were involved in a physical altercation. During the altercation, the informant struck the plaintiff with a stick while she held their child. Due to being struck, the plaintiff was knocked unconscious, and the child fell to the ground.</p> <p>On August 30, 2017, a judge reviewed both arrests and determined probable cause existed to arrest both the plaintiff and the informant.</p> <p>The following statement is based on Detective one's supplemental report:</p> <p>Detective one was assigned to investigate the incident. On September 1, 2017, in the presence of detective two, he contacted and interviewed the informant. The informant advised he and the plaintiff had been arguing when the plaintiff broke out his windows at his residence. The informant indicated he called the police. Once they arrived, he asked them to have the plaintiff leave his residence. The plaintiff left the residence, but then returned with a moving truck and they started arguing. The police were called back out to his residence. The informant indicated he was assisting the plaintiff with moving her belongings out of his residence...the police chose to arrest everyone.</p> <p>Detective one asked the informant how his daughter was injured, he replied, his daughter is learning to walk, and she bangs her head on things all the time. The plaintiff denied throwing items and indicated neither he nor the plaintiff injured their daughter.</p> <p>This concluded detective one's interview of the informant.</p> <p>Detective one interviewed the plaintiff, and she indicated the following:</p> <p>She and the informant were arguing as she was moving out. The plaintiff admitted she was throwing items around, but not at the informant nor their daughter.</p> <p>The plaintiff also indicated the lumps on her daughter's forehead and head were sustained when she bumped her head on the table at her residence.</p>
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	<p>She further stated her daughter climbs and slips on things (no further detail).</p> <p>This concluded detective one's interview with the plaintiff.</p> <p>Detective one interviewed the witness via telephone, and she stated the following:</p> <p>While she watched the plaintiff and informant's daughter, she observed the informant hit the plaintiff and hold her down on the couch. The witness took the plaintiff and the informant's daughter to the garage. While inside of the garage she heard a "clunk" inside of the residence and the informant walked into the garage. The witness then asked the informant where the plaintiff was. The witness attempted to re-enter the residence, but the informant blocked the exit to prevent the plaintiff from exiting the residence. The witness was able to exit the garage and re-enter the residence, which is when she found the plaintiff unconscious on the living room [floor] behind a box. The plaintiff regained consciousness and advised the witness that the informant hit her on the back of the head. The witness additionally stated the plaintiff picked up some CD's and wooden slats (holds the mattress frame together) and began throwing them at the informant. Standing 5' to 7' away from each other, the plaintiff and the informant began throwing items at each other.</p> <p>The witness indicated none of the items hit the plaintiff and informant's daughter and she was unaware their daughter was injured. The witness is uncertain how their daughter was injured. The witness thought perhaps the injuries had been there prior to their arrival at the plaintiff's residence but could not be certain due to their daughter being asleep while they drove to the informant's residence.</p> <p>Detective one asked the witness if she spoke to either the plaintiff or the informant, and she replied, "No."</p> <p>This concluded detective one's interview of the witness.</p> <p>On September 1, 2017, the Los Angeles County District Attorney (DA) filed criminal charges against the plaintiff and the informant.</p> <p>The plaintiff was charged with 273a(a) - Child abuse under circumstances or conditions likely to cause great bodily injury or death and 594(a) - Vandalism.</p> <p>The informant was charged with 273a(a) - Child abuse under circumstances or conditions likely to cause great bodily injury or death.</p> <p>September 8, 2017, the Los Angeles Juvenile Dependency Court conducted a detention hearing. DCFS filed a petition alleging there was a substantial risk the child could be seriously harmed, non-accidentally, by the plaintiff or the informant (ex-boyfriend). The juvenile court determined there was a case and found a prima facie case for detaining the plaintiff's daughter. The Plaintiff contested the outcome.</p> <p>On October 25, 2017, the dependency court conducted a jurisdictional hearing and found the following allegation to be true: the Plaintiff and the ex-boyfriend had a history of previous physical altercations.</p>
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	<p>On October 26, 2017, A preliminary hearing was held in the criminal case. During the proceeding, the witness testified, and confirmed she told the deputies the plaintiff and the informant (ex-boyfriend) argued in the living room and threw objects at each other while the child was present and in the car seat. However, the witness testified that the child's injuries were present prior to their arrival at the residence.</p> <p>The witness denied telling Deputy two the informant (ex-boyfriend) struck the plaintiff with a piece of wood. She additionally denied telling deputy two the child was struck during a physical assault between the plaintiff and the informant (ex-boyfriend).</p> <p>The plaintiff also testified at the preliminary hearing. She stated the child did not have injuries when the deputies arrived at the first service call in the morning.</p> <p>The Plaintiff stated she left residence per the deputies' orders during the first call for service. She went to her relative's home and the child hit her head trying to climb up the legs of a dining table (occurred at approximately 10:00 a.m.). The plaintiff later returned [in a U-Haul truck] to the residence with the child and the witness.</p> <p>The plaintiff denied the child sustained the injury from hitting her head on the car seat, but she stated she may have told the deputies the child may have bumped her head when the plaintiff removed her from the car seat. The plaintiff denied throwing objects at the ex-boyfriend and denied he threw objects at her. The Plaintiff also denied the child was injured from the plaintiff or the informant (ex-boyfriend) throwing objects at each other.</p> <p>The judge determined the available evidence established probable cause a crime was committed, and the matter was to proceed to trial.</p> <p>During trial proceedings, the Plaintiff agreed to plead no contest to vandalism and the dismissal of charge 273a(a) - Child abuse under circumstances or conditions likely to cause great bodily injury or death the child abuse charge. She was convicted of vandalism and granted 18 months of summary probation.</p> <p>The informant (ex-boyfriend) was charged with 273a(a) - Child abuse under circumstances or conditions likely to cause great bodily injury or death. He pleaded no contest to the charge, and was convicted, and granted two years of summary probation.</p>
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1. Briefly describe the **root cause(s)** of the claim/lawsuit:

A **Department** root cause was the factual inconsistencies and/or omissions in deputy two's incident report.

A **Department** root cause in this incident was the deputies one and two did not have equipment (Body Worn Camera) to video record their contact with the plaintiff, in order to prove or disprove plaintiff's allegations.

A **non-Department** root cause was the plaintiff's physical altercation with the informant (ex-boyfriend) in the presence of the child and the child sustaining alleged injuries because of the altercation.

A **non-Department** root cause was the recanting of reported statements by the Plaintiff, the witness, and the ex-boyfriend.

2. Briefly describe recommended corrective actions:
(Include each corrective action, due date, responsible party, and any disciplinary actions if appropriate)

Supervisor's Inquiry

Plaintiff's allegation of being arrested and convicted based on false evidence. The allegation was investigated and addressed as follows:

This incident was thoroughly investigated by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, South Los Angeles Station. An extensive investigation was conducted into the plaintiffs' allegations. The supervisor's inquiry included interviewing both deputies one and two, and reviewing detective one's supplemental report, which was conducted two days after the incident.

The results of the inquiry determined there is no evidence indicating deputy one, deputy two or detective one fabricated any injury to a child, omitted statements or authored a false police report.

Deputies involved in this incident received additional training pertaining to the circumstance identified in this incident.

Body-Worn Cameras (BWC)

On January 31, 2021, sworn personnel assigned to South Los Angeles Station were issued a Body Worn Camera, as a form of transparency. The use of BWC's ensures reliable recording of enforcement and investigative contacts with the public. The Department established policy and procedures for the purpose, use, and deployment of the Department issued BWC:

- Must be turned on during all public contacts and reviewed by the employee.
- Collect evidence for use in criminal investigation and prosecutions.
- Deter criminal activity and uncooperative behavior during law enforcement interactions with the public.
- Promote accountability.
- Assist with resolving public complaints and administrative investigation.
- Supervisors conduct random daily audits of Body Worn Cameras to ensure compliance.

3. Are the corrective actions addressing Department-wide system issues?

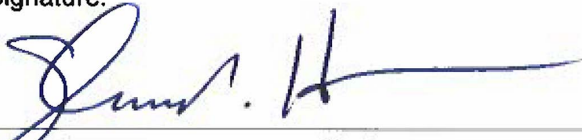
- ☐ Yes – The corrective actions address Department-wide system issues.
- ☒ No – The corrective actions are only applicable to the affected parties.

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

Name: (Risk Management Coordinator)

Shawnee N. Hinchman, Captain
Risk Management Bureau

Signature:



Date:

04/24/2023

Name: (Department Head)

Eileen Decker, Division Director
Office of Constitutional Policing

Signature:



Date:

4/24/23

Chief Executive Office Risk Management Inspector General USE ONLY

Are the corrective actions applicable to other departments within the County?

- ☐ Yes, the corrective actions potentially have County-wide applicability.
- ☒ No, the corrective actions are applicable only to this Department.

Name: Daniela Prowizor-Lacayo (Risk Management Inspector General)

Signature:

Date:

4/24/2023